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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: MARKETING BEMBA

REF: KINSHASA 1223

Classified By: PolOff KRBel for reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador and U.S. Congressman Donald Payne met with Vice President (and presidential candidate) Jean-Pierre Bemba on August 3. During the meeting, Bemba disingenuously said all the right things and gave all the right responses as he pretended to distance himself from the efforts of his exuberant "supporters" to preemptively announce him as winner of the presidential election. End summary.

12. (C) This second of four codel meetings with candidates (septels) was wide-ranging and cordial, with Bemba appearing relaxed and engaging. He stated that if he won the election, he would create a government of national reconciliation in which "things not completed under the transition" would be a priority. He cited lack of progress under the transition government as a major obstacle to future development, noting that the DRC needs reform in the security, economic, and social sectors. (Note: Bemba has been Vice President in charge of economy and finance during the transition. End note.) He also stated that he would "invite all to participate," noting that "to organize social peace, all leaders must be involved," and that "to make the DRC viable, the system must be inclusive down through the local leaders."

13. (C) In response to Rep. Payne's caution that declarations of victory were dangerous (referring to Bemba's television stations which began broadcasting claimed results of a Bemba victory even before polls had closed, per reftel), Bemba countered incongruously that it was his "supporters" who were announcing his victory, and added that he had "told them to stop." Bemba claimed that he asked SRSG Swing to prevent MONUC-run Radio Okapi from airing partial results as well, asserting, "You're right -- it's better that we wait."

14. (C) Bemba referred to allegations of electoral irregularities, claiming massive fraud was committed in the Bukavu area (referring to the campaign of President Kabila, which did very well in the Kivus). Bemba was careful to state that he understood the DRC's first election in over 40 years would not be perfect, but said he reserved the right to complain about problems which might affect the final results.

15. (C) Bemba added that he was concerned about the impartiality of the Supreme Court, which will ultimately adjudicate any challenges to the election process or results. He asked that the international committee pay "special attention" if such challenges arose. He requested that international experts on electoral fraud be appointed to work with the Supreme Court on such cases, noting that it will be

"important to avoid frustrations for those who feel wronged."

¶6. (C) Comment: Although he refrained from overtly claiming victory, Bemba tried to project the image of a president-in-waiting -- gracious towards his opponents, but envisioning his own future role as leader. In typical fashion, he brushed off comments with which he did not agree, and tried to present himself as a reasonable man waiting for his inevitable victory. His reference to Ruberwa's claims of electoral fraud in the Kivus struck a false note; this appeared to be a deliberate, triangulated attack on President Kabila's overwhelming support in the East.

¶7. (C) Comment continued: Far from being the innocent focus in the media of hyped claims of victory from his over-enthusiastic supporters, Bemba is actually the orchestrator of the misinformation which has been broadcast on his personally-owned television stations. Though Bemba did well in Kinshasa and several provinces, he is selling snake oil -- and setting up his volatile supporters for a dangerous disappointment -- by claiming to have won a clear majority in the first round of voting. End comment.

¶8. (U) Congressman Payne did not have an opportunity to clear on this cable.

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